JACOBITE

TRUMP’S WARSAW UPRISING

Nick Land - July 12, 2017 -

Sebastian Indra / Flickr

For supporters and detractors alike, U.S. President Donald J. Trump’s July 6 speech in Warsaw was immediately recognized as the most important of his presidency to date. Since so much

https://web.archive.org/web/20220523220558/https://jacobitemag.com/2017/07/12/trumps-warsaw-uprising/[3/26/2023 10:58:43 AM]

was crystallized by it – or perhaps *brought to a head* – it is impossible to begin making sense of this event without some preliminary broad-brush outline of its context.

The new dominant ideological polarity, on both sides of the Atlantic, exhibits remarkably similar characteristics. Perhaps most strikingly, it displays the culmination of an *ideological-class inversion*, decades in coming, which has aligned the masses – and in particular the native working class – with the right, and social elites with the left. In consequence, populism has been firmly locked into place as a phenomenon of the right. Even those classical liberal stances most tightly bound to the advancement of commercial liberty, and thus most firmly associated with the conservative right, have not escaped radical scrambling, whether through re-assessment, marginalization, or complete inversion.

In this new and disconcerting epoch, business interest has ceased to be any kind of index for right affiliation, and popular opposition to free-trade no longer defines a substantial bloc on the left. If anything, the opposite is now true. Those on the left or right (including this author) who stubbornly maintain that ideological orientation to capitalism is the fundamental determinant of meaningful political polarity find themselves cast into a position of unplugged anachronism. The stunning magnitude of this transition should not be underestimated.

This is not, of course, a development without alarming precedent. From at least one perspective – which is by no means necessarily hysterical – the boundary between right-wing populism and fascism can be difficult to discern. Insofar as the affective context to Trump’s speech is concerned, this is without serious question the most important element.

Many books could be devoted to the new terms of political controversy, and almost certainly will be. Each of the still-unstable new camps is highly heterogeneous, and cross-cut with a variety of complex strategic interests regarding the way the great rift between them is described, so every attempt at articulation will be contested, often fiercely. Yet even amid the present shock and confusion, some basic structure is discernible. Beside the political opposition between *left* and *right* – in its present, re-adjusted, sense – it is not hard to recognize a corresponding globalist and nationalist emphasis, pitting universalists against particularists: defenders of the contemporary world’s institutional order against its opponents, or partisans of cosmopolitan openness against parochial localists, according to taste. Because, concretely, the insurgency marks a crisis of international social management, and of confidence in established, credentialized elites, to describe it as a struggle between *technocrats* and *populists* is roughly as neutral as we can get. Such terms are employed here as mere labels, rather than as judgments, or explanations. No extravagant disparagement is directed at either, relative to the other. The constituencies they name have substantial depths, exceeding any facile definition. They are obscure social masses in conflict, rather than competing ideas.

With Trump’s arrival in Warsaw, two pairs of profoundly antagonistic political constituencies

https://web.archive.org/web/20220523220558/https://jacobitemag.com/2017/07/12/trumps-warsaw-uprising/[3/26/2023 10:58:43 AM]

– one American, the other European – were mapped across each other, resonantly. Populist Red America had found its local champion in Warsaw, versus that of technocratic Blue America, in Berlin. These alignments were not seriously questioned, from any side. That the open-door policy of Angela Merkel's Germany, exemplifying its defense of EU institutions and traditional policy stances in general, were in fundamental affinity with the ideological intuitions of Blue America, were self-evident to all parties. Reciprocally, the identification of Trumpian Red America with the Polish stance of EU dissidence – on the immigration issue most pointedly – was taken as self-evident. Even before the visit, to those paying attention, the Polish regime had become an icon of ethno-nationalist popular revolt against technocratic transnational government, evangelical secularism, and mass migration. Everything clicked.

It is difficult to be confident about how much lucid strategy under-pinned the event. In all matters Trump, the default assumption tends to be *not very much*. Given Trump's characteristic bluster, and unusual comfort with low demagoguery, such dismissal is to be expected. This is not at all to suggest it is acute. If political instincts tuned almost to perfection played no part, then divine intervention – or some blessing of fortune functionally indistinguishable from it – is the next most plausible hypothesis.

The speech itself was rhetorically pedestrian, and even clumsy. It is hard to imagine any single sentence being remembered from it, unless for purposes of dry historical illustration. The language was tailored entirely to its immediate audience – both local and international – rather than to the delectation of future generations. The speech was, in this respect among others, a thing of the social media age, tuned to instantaneous feedback. It manifestly *schmoozed*, even by the dismal standards of such orations. The rapport it struck with its local listeners tipped into collective self-congratulation. *Wow, we really are great* seems to have been the consensus, among all directly involved. To those disinclined to identify with the speaker and throng in question, this can only have been annoying. Enemy rallies generally are, as conservatives learnt during the Obama years. The untroubled self-love of one's foes, exuberantly manifested, is a truly horrible thing to see. Naturally enough, Trump has been no more distressed by this fact than his predecessor.

There is one further, and indispensable contextual element that needs to be raised before proceeding to the media reaction – which was, of course, the deepest level of *the event* – and that is the 'Jew Thing.' Everyone knows, at some level, we have to start talking about that, in some way, even those who – entirely understandably – *really* don't want to. Ignoring the topic is a disappearing option, because there's no reason, *at all*, to think it's going away. Perhaps it was mere coincidence that Trump's visit took him deep into holocaust territory, which, again, nobody really seems to want to mention, even though it was an explicit thread within his speech. It was, however, structurally essential to everything that followed. Unmistakably, even as it went unacknowledged, the Jewish dimension added greatly to the feverish intensity of the response.

https://web.archive.org/web/20220523220558/https://jacobitemag.com/2017/07/12/trumps-warsaw-uprising/[3/26/2023 10:58:43 AM]

The extreme sensitivity to Jewish socio-political anxieties that has prevailed in the postwar West is notably losing its edge, in a way that doesn’t seem plausibly reversible. At least in part, this is a consequence of the generalization of identity politics, predominantly under leftist direction, which has the peculiar cultural effect – in its late stages – that special cases are becoming increasingly difficult to make. Victimological status bursts its banks, among conditions of unbounded, and symmetrical, ethnic paranoia. Lurid grievance anecdotes – tailored to every imaginable social niche – are always in abundance, fed by Internet supply-lines. Persecution narratives explode from all sides. Demands to “check one’s privilege” have proven awkwardly mobile, and reversible, as they have been increasingly normalized, even to the point – in this particular example – of overt, caustic antisemitism.

The result is nothing less than a crisis of the diasporic Jewish left, whose argumentative edge has been blunted by decades of exceptional immunity to unflinching criticism. Defensive cultural strategies that have, for half a century, been accepted, unquestioned as a special ethno-historical privilege have quite suddenly become subjected to irreverent public inspection. *Everyone wants a piece of ethnic survivalism now*.

This is the key to what happened in Warsaw. It is evoked as the subtext to Peter Beinart’s wail of distress, when exposed to Trump’s line: “The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive.” Beinart was quite correct in recognizing – horrified – the resonance of this sentence with the most extreme elements of the present transition, but that was no help to him. He had been ambushed.

Trump made his speech explicitly about ethnic survival, disarmingly aligned with WWII Jewish victimage, with heroic Polish resistance to foreign military occupation, and finally – most provocatively – with the contemporary situation of the West. It naturally helped him, *overwhelmingly*, that the Warsaw Uprising was an insurrection against actual Nazis. This provided a vaccination against the normal workings of Godwin’s Law. *You know who else wanted ethnic survival? Adolf Hitler!* — We have reached the core of the event now. There was simply no way this response, *which was the only one that mattered to Trump’s enemies on the left*, could conceivably be made to operate on this occasion. What was being celebrated was the Poles surviving Nazism, then communism, and now – infinitely awkwardly – *again* the Germans, this time cast in the role of principal executors for a transnational political order promoting mandatory multiculturalism, secular technocracy, and the culture of Western historical self-flagellation. The result, almost inevitably, was a rout.

It took no great flights of oratorical bedazzlement to triumph on this battlefield. The situation did almost everything. Trump’s maddened enemies blundered into the trap, and were shattered. The left, for whom *of course the West has no right to survive*, found itself ideologically isolated to a degree that was unprecedented under the present administration.

https://web.archive.org/web/20220523220558/https://jacobitemag.com/2017/07/12/trumps-warsaw-uprising/[3/26/2023 10:58:43 AM]

Their tactical allies in the ‘Never-Trump’ conservative establishment evaporated. Hardened Trump skeptics, such as Rod Dreher, David French, and Jonah Goldberg contributed their talents to hunting down the fleeing leftist remnants. David Frum only held his ground in opposition by arguing that Trump was personally unworthy of his own speech.

Beinart came out of the trauma worst. He will forever be haunted by his own definition of the matter at stake, which was immediately judged from all sides to be an unforced production of Alt-Right propaganda: “The West is a racial and religious term. To be considered Western, a country must be largely Christian (preferably Protestant or Catholic) and largely white.” Across social media, much nodding ensued, from constituencies whose approval he would surely least appreciate.

Jonah Goldberg refused explicitly to follow what was now so vividly exhibited as the road of obligate European ethnomasochism and civilizational self-hatred: “What’s ironic is that Peter’s desk-pounding outrage about Trump’s talk of the West is oh-so Western. The West’s tolerance for anti-Western philosophies is a fairly unique feature of the West itself. We love to beat ourselves up.” Defense of the West, therefore, is taken up as a cause inclusive even of its critics.

It is Rod Dreher, however, who best captures what Trump consolidated in Warsaw, perhaps for the first time. He says, comparing Trump to his leftist critics:

> *As is often the case with conservatives and Trump, no matter how much you may despise him and his pomps and works, in the end, you know that he doesn’t hate your beliefs, and that he and his government aren’t going to use the power of the State to suppress you as a threat to public order and all things good and holy. […] That’s not nothing.*

However much Trump fosters aversion among many conservatives, he also provokes events that remind conservatives why they hate liberals (using these terms in their degenerate contemporary American sense). Plenty of conservatives hate Trump, and will continue to hate him, probably until the end of his second term in office, if not longer. But the *way* liberals hate him poses an obvious existential threat to all forms of conservative life. As Martin Niemöller never quite said, *first they came for Trump and it was pretty damn obvious I was next in the queue*.

Nick Land is an independent writer living in Shanghai.

Share this:

https://web.archive.org/web/20220523220558/https://jacobitemag.com/2017/07/12/trumps-warsaw-uprising/[3/26/2023 10:58:43 AM]

Related

Historiography Wars
January 25, 2018
In "History"

French Leave
June 12, 2019
In "Politics"

How Message-Board Culture Remade the Left
August 12, 2017
In "Culture"

TAGS DONALD TRUMP NICK LAND

Previous Article
HUMANITIES AGAINST HUMANITY

Next Article
NOT ONLY REVOLUTIONS: SOCIOLOGY AFTER SOCIETY

RELATED POSTS

https://web.archive.org/web/20220523220558/https://jacobitemag.com/2017/07/12/trumps-warsaw-uprising/[3/26/2023 10:58:43 AM]

COVID-911

Cody Wilson - April 16, 2020

COVID-911

Cody Wilson - April 16, 2020

ARCHIVES

- November 2020
- July 2020
- June 2020
- May 2020
- April 2020
- March 2020
- February 2020
- January 2020
- December 2019
- November 2019
- October 2019
- September 2019
- August 2019
- July 2019
- June 2019
- May 2019
- April 2019
- March 2019
- February 2019
- January 2019
- December 2018
- November 2018
- October 2018
- September 2018
- August 2018
- July 2018
- June 2018
- May 2018
- April 2018
- March 2018
- February 2018
- January 2018
- December 2017
- November 2017
- October 2017
- September 2017
- August 2017
- July 2017
- June 2017
- May 2017

SOCIAL MEDIA

https://web.archive.org/web/20220523220558/https://jacobitemag.com/2017/07/12/trumps-warsaw-uprising/[3/26/2023 10:58:43 AM]

© Jacobite 2017